

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The United States House of Representatives today overwhelmingly passed H.R. 4069, the Social Security Benefit Enhancements for Women Act of 2002. If signed into law, the bill would enhance Social Security benefits by \$4 billion over the next 10 years and help approximately 120,000 women.

Representative Xavier Becerra (CA - 30), the only member from Southern California who is a member of the House Committee on Ways and Means and its Subcommittee on Social Security, voted for the bill.

During today's debate on the floor of the House, Rep. Becerra said, "This modest improvement in Social Security benefits for women should be considered nothing more than a down payment of what we must do to give women, who for years have worked hard in and out of the home and in and out of the office, the chance to receive their fair share of retirement security."

House Congressional Democrats shared Rep. Becerra's concern that the bill did not do enough and introduced H.R. 4671, the Social Security Widow's Benefit Guarantee Act. Due to parliamentary rules and procedures, H.R. 4671 was not considered.

H.R. 4671, introduced by Representative Robert Matsui (CA - 5), would have provided \$73 billion of increased Social Security benefits to over five million women, widows and widowers over the next 10 years. It had over 100 co-sponsors, including Rep. Becerra.

Rep. Becerra took the opportunity to highlight the benefits of H.R. 4671 during today's debate. "Five million people would have been affected by the Matsui bill, whereas H.R. 4069 will help 120,000 women," Rep. Becerra said. "But let me be clear, we must pass H.R. 4069 because that is a 120,000 women who deserve the assistance. But nevertheless, there are millions more out there waiting to receive their due. We cannot do retirement security on the cheap, and we cannot continue to say that we will place Social Security first among out national priorities and then not do it the right way."